CMP
the council of
maritime premiers
box 2044, halifax, n.s. B3J 2Z1
(902) 424-7590
(902) 424-8976 (fax)

CPMM
le conseil des premiers
ministres des maritimes
c.p. 2044, halifax, n.é., B3J 2Z1
(902) 424-7590
(902) 424-8976 (bélino)

MULTI-GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE:

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND TWO CANADIAN EXAMPLES

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Phil Hartling

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I. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

This paper will:

- review the assumptions underpinning multi-government partnerships
- explore some theories related to the operation of such partnerships
- look into the role of leadership
- consider a process for evaluating partnerships

Based on these factors the paper constructs a framework for multi-government partnerships and applies it to two Canadian multi-government partnerships. Finally, the paper explores the capacity of multi-government partnerships to be agents of change.

DEFINITIONS

- Multi-government - Two or more sovereign governments.
- Partnerships - A formal or conventional arrangement or interaction among two or more parties, with some measure of permanence. Partnerships could run the gamut from formal organizations with varied goals and a legislative mandate to informal but regular meetings without specific goals or mandate.

METHODOLOGY

This paper attempts to address multi-government partnerships as agents of change. To do that it is necessary to explore how these partnerships work. Despite lacking volumes of information on this subject we do have tools with which to examine multi-government partnerships. Interorganizational theory, as pursued by Anant Negandhi and others, helps to explain the complex nature of interorganizational relationships. Peter Drucker's recent research on "The New Realities"[1] challenges the nature of traditional political leadership. A variety

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[1]Peter F. Drucker, The New Realities, Harper & Row Publishers, Toronto, 1989.

of work on negotiation theory and on the subjects of collaboration and mediation add a useful perspective on the workings of a multi-government partnership. Duchacek's work on the territorial dimension of politics also deals with cooperative frameworks, and is most helpful.

There is a quantity of literature on international organizations such as those of the United Nations. This paper will draw on that work. It can be argued that multi-government partnerships involving many tens of countries are different than partnerships involving a few sub-national governments. However, if a theory of multi-government partnerships is generally applicable we can learn from partnerships at the international, national, regional and even local levels.

The paper will test the emergent theory against two multi-government partnerships at the Canadian first-ministers' level. The Council of Maritime Premiers (CMP) and the Western Premiers' Council (WPC) are relatively mature and stable multi-provincial structures. They each have undergone recent reviews by their owner provinces and have evolved somewhat in structure and style. Both organizations have survived numerous changes in first ministers, differing party politics, economic boom and bust and a long series of conflicts among the provincial partners.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The United Nations created the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1983. Its mandate was to re-examine the critical problems of environment and development facing our planet and to develop realistic proposals to solve them. The Commission concluded the need for bold, new, partnerships.

> National boundaries have become so porous that traditional distinctions between local, national, and international issues have become blurred. Policies formerly considered to be exclusively matters of 'national concern' now have an impact on the ecological bases of other nations' development and survival. Conversely, the growing reach of some nations' policies - economic, trade, monetary, and most sectoral policies - into the 'sovereign' territory of other nations limits the affected nations' options in devising national solutions to their 'own' problems.[2]

Partnerships appear to be playing an increasingly important role in national and international affairs. Commitment to sustainable development has initiated new partnerships within and among jurisdictions. Political change in Eastern Europe is redefining NATO's boundaries. The European single market is redefining the economic sovereignty of European states and North American free trade may do the same for Canada, the United States and Mexico. International efforts on arms control challenge the principle of sovereignty and highlight the need for appropriate multi-government structures to negotiate, implement and oversee super-power agreements. Canada enters the decade, not only faced with the international forces of change, but in the midst of revisiting the constitutional bargain. Regional blocks advocating new arrangements on the distribution of powers, taxation, equalization and native rights plus many other key matters will help shape the outcome.

Change is becoming increasingly linked with the development of effective multi-government structures. Yet, there appears to be no theoretical framework against which to design or evaluate a multi-government partnership. Sir Peter Smithers, in a report produced for the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, summed things up:

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[2]The World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future, Oxford University Press, New York, 1987, page 312.

> An intergovernmental organization... is an organism so complex that it is almost impossible for an outsider, no matter how brilliant and painstaking, to penetrate beyond the superficial forms of characters and formal procedures to the underlying realities...[3]

This paper will explore those 'underlying realities'.

II. UNDERSTANDING MULTI-GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS

This section explores the theory of multi-government partnerships under four headings. The categories are not watertight, but should provide some order to dealing with a diverse range of subjects.

ASSUMPTIONS UNDERPINNING MULTI-GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Three assumptions underpin multi-government partnerships - sovereignty, unanimous consent and community of interest.

A. Sovereignty - "Today, in our era of complex interdependence, few, if any, nations are completely self reliant".[4] By definition, multi-government partnerships are comprised of sovereign partners. It has already been noted that traditional borders are being challenged by the forces of social, political and economic change. Gerald Zeitz observes that, traditionally, we have structured organizations with the assumption that they are functionally autonomous:

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[3]Robert I. McLaren, Civil Servants and Public Policy - A Comparative Study of International Secretariats, Wilfred Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Ontario, 1980, page 130.

[4]Ivo Duchacek, The Territorial Dimensions of Politics Within, Among and Across Nations, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1986, page 190.

> This assumption has been reinforced by the practical concerns of government and business, both of whom have accepted the existing social structure as a given, and have been concerned primarily with manipulating the individual organization or sets of organizations within that structure.[5]

Many issues lend themselves to multi-party solutions. Cooperation is often most successful on those issues where the partners are unable to effectively act alone or where the costs of doing so present real barriers. Two examples illustrate this point. The Western Premiers' Conference has regularly discussed transportation issues because the provinces see that, air, rail and surface transportation linkages cannot be effectively managed by one province acting alone. The Maritimes support regional post secondary programs in medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine because the cost of having identical programs in each province would be prohibitive.

One assumption in creating a multi-government partnership must be the realization that the partners are not, or do not wish to be, fully autonomous.

B. Unanimous Consent - Decisions by multi-government partnerships often require the unanimous consent of the partners. As Duchacek observes "...The ensuing paralysing effect of veto power thus being granted to every unit could be overcome - as in practice it often is - by consociational procedures, that is the search for consensus by means of interelite negotiations".[6]

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[5]Anant R. Negandhi, Interorganization Theory, The Comparative Administrative Research Institute, Kent State University Press, 1980, page 47.

[6]Duchacek, op. cit., page 190.

In the CMP the search for consensus can take place at a variety of levels - provincial/regional staff bilaterally, regional task groups or committees on a multilateral basis, and among the Premiers. Barbara Gray defines the framework for negotiation among elites:

> Successfully advancing a shared vision... requires identification and coordination of a diverse set of stakeholders, each of whom holds some but not all of the necessary resources. To be successful, coordination must be accomplished laterally without the hierarchical authority to which most managers are accustomed. These circumstances require a radically different approach to organizing and managing[7]

Gray's model suggests two interesting points with respect to unanimity. First, she suggests that all stakeholders must be at the table. Consequently a unanimous agreement among Premiers might only be implemented if each Premier effectively represents all stakeholders in his/her province. Second, negotiating a multi-government deal given the need for unanimous consent requires a whole different set of tools and techniques. In Gray's words "...coordination must be accomplished laterally without hierarchical authority". The discussion of how multi-government partnerships actually work will cover some of these process considerations.

Two final points with respect to unanimous consent bear noting. Partnerships require discipline to ensure that the veto is applied at the appropriate level and time. Second, partnerships need the strength and will to deal with conflict.

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[7]Barbara Gray, Collaborating - Funding Common Ground for Multi-Party Problems, Jossey-Bass Publishers, London, 1988, page 9.

C. Community of Interest - The intensity of a partnership depends upon the degree of shared vision and commitment to common goals. Partners must have a community of interest. Robert McLaren suggests three questions to help expand upon this notion: is the membership regional or global?; is the function political or technical?; and, is the scope single-purpose or multi-purpose?[8] In the case of the CMP and the WPC, the partnerships are regional, political and multi-purpose.

Dr. Charles McMillan, in his report to the Maritime Premiers, paints in bold terms the Maritime provinces' community of interest:

> ...the current, uncoordinated way of conducting the public's business in the Maritimes, far from closing the income gap, will lead to a further gap between the Maritimes and the rest of Canada. More to the point, the real gap will be expressed in missed opportunities - in a failed capacity of the Maritime Provinces to take the once only bold leaps of faith that the window for diversification and change has opened up in the next decade.[9]

The assumptions of sovereignty, unanimous consent and community of interest are present in both the Council of Maritime Premiers and Western Premiers' Conference. However, as we shall later see, understanding how those assumptions are played out reveals important differences between the two multi-government partnerships.

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[8]McLaren, op. cit., page 2.

[9]Dr. Charles McMillan, Standing Up to the Future: The Maritimes in the 1990's, Council of Maritime Premiers, 1989, p.3.

MULTI-GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS AT WORK

How do multi-government partnerships actually work? A number of concepts relate to how the partnerships function: interorganizational theory, networking, collaboration, mediation and negotiating theory. While each of these concepts is important none on their own defines the underlying realities.

A. Interorganizational theory. Interorganizational theory is a framework for understanding relationships between and among organizations. Anant Negandhi suggests that there are four dimensions in interorganizational relationships: the nature of formalization; intensity of involvement; the nature of reciprocity; and the standardization of transactions between and among organizations.[10] These four dimensions will be pivotal in understanding the differences between our two Canadian examples.

B. Networking theory. Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps describe networking as "making connections among peers".[11] Aside from connotations involving yuppies, squash and 'the club', networking has a useful application in understanding multi-government partnerships. Examine the characteristics of a network:

- The parts are autonomous and self-sustaining.
- Each member of the network brings his/her own personal network to the table.
- Networks are dispersed and flexible, not hierarchical.
- Networks accommodate disagreement, but the players share some common values and visions.
- Networks are led by facilitation and not by control.
- Networks depend upon personal relationships, friendships and trust.

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[10]Negandhi, op. cit., page 5.

[11]Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, "A Network Model", The Futurist July-August 1987, page 23.

- Within the network some people are active in maintaining linkages while others serves as nodes.
- Network participants see the network as helping them to achieve personal goals.
- Networks are based on shared values and not concrete objects. "It is the sense of cooperation among self-reliant, decision-making peers that vitalizes a network."[12]

These characteristics are valid components of a typical multi-government partnership. Take for example the statement of purpose[13] adopted by the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers:

> The Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers advances the interests of the eleven jurisdictions through cooperation. The Conference is a highly effective international relationship of states and provinces sharing ideas and building on historic ties. The Conference encourages cooperation among the private and public sectors in the region. It achieves its purpose in four ways:
>
> - making decisions and taking collective action
> - sponsoring conferences, seminars and meetings
> - undertaking research on mutually agreed topics
> - increasing public awareness of issues

The Conference epitomizes each of those things identified as characteristics of a network; those characteristics have helped define the role and style of the Conference as it has evolved over 18 years.

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[12]Ibid, page 25.

[13]The Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers, Building on Tradition, 18th Annual Conference, June, 1990.

C. Collaboration. Multi-government partnerships tend to have institutionalized methods of coordination, such as regular meetings of the First Ministers. Collaboration, on the other hand, is a process and not an outcome.[14] Collaboration is among the techniques used to resolve conflicts and advance a shared vision. Collaboration can take place in the presence or absence of structures.

As noted earlier in this paper, Barbara Gray suggests that through collaboration one must work laterally, without the hierarchical authority to which most managers are accustomed. She identifies five critical features of a collaborative effort: stakeholders are interdependent; solutions emerge from constructive dialogue; decisions are jointly owned; stakeholders assume collective responsibility; and that collaboration is an emergent process.[15] To successfully complete a deal it is necessary to identify the stakeholders, define the problem, establish ground rules, set the agenda, negotiate a shared conclusion, and work with the various constituencies in implementing the deal.[16] This sets out a process that multi-government partnerships can follow to reach consensus and introduce change.

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[14]Gray, op. cit., page 15.

[15]Ibid, page 11.

[16]Ibid, page 57.

The obstacles to a collaborative process are numerous: imperfect information about the issues or stakeholders, institutions with contrary interests, historical or ideological differences, impatience and other time-related factors, differing political agendas and cultures, differing perceptions of risk and priority, and variations in the quality of leadership. Effective multi-government partnerships must overcome these obstacles.

D. Mediation and the role of the mediator. Most multi-government partnerships have some sort of dedicated staff support function that helps to organize and expedite the work of the partners. Among their tasks these secretariats often act as consensus builders. The capacity to mediate among the partners is necessary if the partnership is to address complex or controversial issues.

E. Negotiation Theory. The Harvard Negotiation Project tells us something of how the parties to a multi-government negotiation approach the table. To prepare for negotiations it is necessary to know yourself, anticipate the needs of your adversary, collect information and analyze the alternatives open to you. Fisher and Ury[17] instruct negotiators to separate people from the problem; focus on interests, not positions; establish precise goals at the outset; invent options for mutual gain; and use appropriate techniques.

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[17]Roger Fisher and William Ury, Getting to Yes, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1981

The Harvard model is useful in understanding multi-government partnerships. First, partners have to agree with the issues and with the scope and nature of the negotiation. This implies a pre-negotiation step. Second, information is power. Partners need to know about themselves and about the other parties to the negotiation. They rely on the flow of information, either formally or informally, among the partners. Third, it is essential to objectively evaluate alternatives before negotiations start. Consultants or independent staff can help identify all of the alternatives. Fourth, relationships are key. Positive and constructive relationships among the key players will help to establish the trust and communication needed to negotiate.

The concepts surrounding interorganizational theory, networking, collaboration, mediation and negotiation help explain how multi-government partnerships work.

LEADERSHIP AND MULTI-GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS

This paper focuses on two multi-government partnerships led by Premiers. The role of leader is extremely important in understanding the nature and capacity of multi-government partnerships.

A. Leaders need a vision. Barriers to effective multi-government solutions are numerous. The success of multi-government partnerships is largely based on political vision:

> ... leaders need a vision of what collaboration can accomplish, sensitivity and the ability to develop relationships with diverse stakeholders, and a sense of optimism and process literacy, that is, knowledge of the process tools, both human and organizational, for designing effective collaborations.[18]

B. The role of political leaders must change. According to Peter Drucker, political leaders "... do not look upon government as the organ to produce a better, let alone a perfect, society. They see the function of government in specifics..."[19] In other words, political leaders tend to focus on issues (taxes, the Persian Gulf, resurfacing a highway...) and not on ends (quality of life, strategic planning for desired ends...). In such a setting multi-government partnerships might be one of several alternatives to address certain issues. However, Drucker suggests that the world needs a new kind of leader, one willing to organize around agreement over ends and to mobilize the consensus around ends[20]. Drucker's new leader may necessarily have a vision of what collaboration can accomplish (and may more easily turn to multi-government structures as a means to an end).

C. Leaders are sensitive to demand. Second Opinion, by Michael Rachlis and Carol Kushner,[21] looks into Canada's health care delivery system. Monique Begin, in her introductory remarks to the book,

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[18]Gray, op. cit., page 279.

[19]Drucker, op. cit., page 15.

[20]Drucker, op. cit., page 112.

[21]Michael Rachlis and Carol Kushner, Second Opinion: What's wrong with Canada's health care system and how to fix it, Collins, Toronto, 1989.

references an early experience with Cabinet. She was attempting to sell a particular idea to Cabinet. After explaining the new initiative Allan J. MacEachen, a Cabinet veteran, posed the telling question - where is the demand for change? Extrapolated from this, who is asking for the new policy initiative and are those views stronger than the people who would opt for the status quo. Institutions and history tend to reinforce province-building and traditional structures associated with problem-solving. Multi-government partnerships are not traditional. When multilateral pressure groups reinforce the validity of multi-government partnerships, the leaders might be more willing to advocate multi-government options.

D. Leaders must be committed, over time, to cooperation. The golden rule aside, cooperation is not a natural act. People are naturally competitive, or at least North American culture encourages them to be so. Cooperation that is nourished for the purpose of long term gain over short term gain, according to Harvey Liebenstein, is difficult to maintain:

> ...individuals cannot artificially impose changes in their feelings about cooperation. If they have not been raised and nurtured in a culture that stresses cooperation in day-to-day activities, a golden-rule standard does not come naturally.[22]

Liebenstein goes on to note that there are no "horizontal supports" for long-term cooperative behaviour. As soon as one party chooses to act in their own self-interest (so as to take advantage of

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[22]Harvey Liebenstein, Inside the Firm - The Inefficiencies of Hierarchy, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1987, page 54.

potentially greater short-term benefits) it is difficult for the second party to continue to act cooperatively. David Gillespie and Dennis Mileti go further, by saying that "...the cooperative impulse depends upon the fact that the interest of one happens to harmonize with the interest of others. If the harmony is disturbed, the desire to cooperate is likely to vanish".[23] Leaders can expect opposition to collaborative deals. In such an environment the sustained dedication and commitment of leaders is essential to successfully maintaining a cooperative relationship over time.

These four points - vision, focus on ends, existence of demand for and acceptance of multi-government solutions, and sustained commitment - highlight the critical role of leaders.

EVALUATING THE PERFORMANCE OF MULTI-GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS

The notions of success and failure are extremely important to the survival of any organization. Business can be measured by return on investment. Government agencies tend to be measured against the number of programs delivered or clients served. Hospitals and doctors can be measured against health status indicators and utilization parameters. Universities might be measured by the output of faculty or the performance of alumni. What parameters ought we use to measure the success and failure of multi-government partnerships?

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[23]David F. Gillespie and Dennis S. Mileti, Technostructures and Interorganizational Relations, Lexington Books/D.C. Heath and Company, Toronto, 1979, page 20.

It is very tempting to analyze multi-government partnerships on the basis of specific outcomes or deals. In his 1988 paper titled The Council of Maritime Premiers and the Battle for Territorial Integrity, Steve Tomblin suggests that "...the only time that the Maritime Premiers have reached agreements is when either each Premier's political interests are served in the process, or the issue involved is essentially unimportant politically".[24] A 1986 provincial task force struck to review the activities of the CMP concluded that, as a basic principle of Maritime cooperation, on each deal all partners must gain and no partner can lose.[25] Neither of these assessments, in the mind of this author, captured the complex nature of multi-government partnerships and the means against which their performance might be evaluated. Four points demonstrate why:

A. The analysis of cooperative ventures, agreements or institutions cannot be done in isolation. Some goodwill is generated based on positive experience; for example the Western Economic Opportunities Conference is often cited as the principal impetus for western multi-province cooperation through the 1970's. Considerable time and effort must go into maintaining a positive decision-making environment. An evaluation of the success and failure of multi-government partnerships ought to include an assessment of the environment, and how the partnership positively and negatively influences the environment. It is impossible to understand the CMP without understanding the history and breadth of Maritime intergovernmental cooperation.

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[24]Stephen Tomblin, The Council of Maritime Premiers and the Battle for Territorial Integrity, page 14.

[25]Council of Maritime Premiers, Report of the Review Task Force, 1987.

B. It is in the nature of bureaucracy to grow and strengthen, and to 'protect turf'. However multi-government partnerships are not bureaucracies. While partnerships do result in cooperative structures, agreements and interactions, these deals are more the exception than the rule. More often than not, partnerships decide not to proceed with cooperative ventures. But a decision not to adopt a multi-government solution may not be a failure. It, in fact, may be the best decision for the partners. It is therefore inappropriate to evaluate multi-government partnerships by simply counting structures or agreements.

C. The prisoner's dilemna is often used to describe the theory of the firm; it applies to multi-government partnerships. Two people commit a crime and are caught. Each realizes that they might be able to achieve a shorter sentence by confessing to the crime and implicating the other. They know however, that should their partner confess first, they will face a stiffer sentence. Should both partners confess, then the outcome may not benefit either. The best chance to achieve a positive outcome is for neither prisoner to confess. In the same way, the best outcome for employees of a firm is to work together to maximize benefit to the firm, and hence benefit all employees. Within a multi-government arena, the best interests of a Premier/province might be served by acting alone; the risks associated with acting alone are also higher. Premiers may be willing to forgo their optimum provincial outcome to minimize risk and maximize benefits to the entire region. An evaluation of the success of a multi-government venture would have to include an assessment of all issues that might ' addressed, optimum provincial

outcomes, optimum regional outcomes and actual outcomes. In effect one would be evaluating the degree of self-interest, communication and trust among the partners.

D. Multi-government partnerships can force another level of review on important issues. In the two Canadian examples agendas are not restricted to decision items. Quite often the Premiers address important issues on which they intend only to share information and exchange ideas. It is impossible to quantify the impact of multi-government partnerships on the internal politics of the partners. However any review of partnerships must take some account of this value.

These points do not diminish the need to evaluate the performance of multi-government partnerships. Programs undertaken by multi-government partnerships can be evaluated against specific and measurable targets. A cooperative tourism program might be evaluated against an objective of increasing tourism by 20% over three years. An evaluation of the partnership itself necessitates a much broader, and more sophisticated, assessment of how the partnership has performed by, for example: influencing its environment; supporting the initiatives of its partners; acting as an agent for positive change; generating constructive options; and improving the internal decision-making of its partners.

CONCLUSIONS - A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Webster's defines a theory as "the analysis of a set of facts in their relation to one another". Armed with this definition, and with some understanding of the functioning of multi-government partnerships, it is possible to construct a framework for multi-government partnerships. This framework might be summarized as follows:

1. Three assumptions underpin multi-government partnerships: sovereignty; unanimity; community of interest. Partners are sovereign but are not, or do not wish to be, fully autonomous. Unanimity implies that each partner has a "veto". A successful partnership requires the discipline to know when the veto ought to be applied and the strength to resolve conflicts. The intensity of a partnership depends upon the degree of shared vision and commitment to common goals. Partners need a community of interest.

2. Partnerships can be evaluated by their degree of formalization, intensity of involvement, nature of reciprocity and the standardization of transactions. These factors also help to identify the range of options open to multi-government partnerships, as will be discussed in a later section of this paper.

3. Multi-government partnerships are networks and depend upon formal and informal relationships. The flow of information and degree of trust among the partners will effect the success of multi-government negotiations.

4. Multi-government deal making depends upon tools and techniques which are sensitive to the variety of stakeholders, differing interests and priorities of the participants. Leaders must be process literate, that is, know the appropriate tools to exploit each opportunity.

5. Multi-government partnerships depend upon leaders with a vision of what can be accomplished and with the political will to focus on ends and not issues.

6. The success or failure of a partnership must be measured over time and include an assessment of how the partnership influences the participants and their environment.

III. TESTING THE THEORY

So far this paper has discussed the environment for multi-government partnerships along with some appropriate concepts. The paper proposes a theory, or set of factors, to help explain multi-government partnerships. This section attempts to apply the theory to two multi-government partnerships. But first it is necessary to overview the CMP and WPC.

THE COUNCIL OF MARITIME PREMIERS - an overview

The recent history of the Council might be traced to 1956 when the Atlantic Premiers began meeting annually. (For a comprehensive review of Atlantic cooperation from 1956 - 1971 see Evans[26].) In 1965 the Premiers of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia agreed to commission... "a study to enquire into the advantages and disadvantages of a union of the Province of Nova Scotia and the Province of New Brunswick to become one province within the nation".[27] Prince Edward Island agreed to participate in 1968. From the initial discussion of the study, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador expressed no interest in the prospect of union.

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[26]Paul Evans, Report on Atlantic/Maritime Interprovincial Cooperation Between 1950 and 1971, Council of Maritime Premiers, Halifax, N.S., 1985.

[27]Maritime Union Study, The Report on Maritime Union, Maritime Union Study, 1970, page 1.

The Council of Maritime Premiers was formally created on May 25, 1971. An interprovincial agreement signed by the Premiers of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, and identical legislation in the three provinces, provides a legal framework for CMP activities. The agreement calls on the Council to promote unity of purpose, to ensure maximum coordination and to provide a framework for joint undertakings.

The Council's mandate[28] is unrestricted and is fundamentally process oriented:

1. discussion of matters of importance to the three provinces;
2. initiation of studies on economic, social and cultural programs and policies which affect or concern the Maritime Provinces;
3. coordination of public policies which affect or concern the Maritime Provinces;
4. approval of joint submissions of the Maritime Provinces to the Government of Canada or any agencies thereof;
5. initiation and sustaining of joint programs of the three Provinces;
6. power to constitute a Maritime Provinces Commission, to define its duties and functions, and to appoint the members thereof.

All but the final clause have been used frequently by the Premiers. The Council must meet four times per year; since its inception the Council has held 77 formal meetings. Council reports annually to the three legislatures. Council decisions must be unanimous, thereby giving each province a veto. The principles of sovereignty and equality are thus preserved.

A permanent Steering Committee (two senior representatives from each province plus senior officials of the Council) assist the Premiers in developing agendas, in handling routine matters and in providing a focal point for access to the three provincial bureaucracies.

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[28]Agreement establishing a Council of Maritime Premiers, May 25, 1971.

Each Premier is responsible for defending the Council's budget to his/her Government. In addition to the Premiers, the ministers responsible for management board are formally involved in managing Council and its agencies. This regional treasury board is one of the checks and balances which provide oversight on the Council. Council produces Estimates and its expenditures are part of each province's public accounts process.

Council meetings are in camera, however on most occasions the Premiers conclude their business with a press conference. Communiques describe some of the decisions of Council, although most decisions are confidential. Council meetings usually include two components - a formal session involving the Premiers and senior provincial and CMP officials and an informal meeting involving only Premiers or the Premiers and the Secretary to Council.

The Premiers have met with groups or individuals outside the governments of the Maritimes. (A few examples include: Claude Ryan regarding the 1980 Québec Referendum; the Canada Council on support for the arts; TQM Pipelines during the negotiation of a Maritime pipeline; numerous federal ministers; the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council; and, Maritime native groups.)

Chairmanship of the Council rotates quarterly with the role of host. Traditionally the Chairman's position is not accompanied by significant additional duties with respect to the agenda or briefing materials.

The Council is served by a small permanent secretariat (9 professional staff), located in Halifax. The secretariat organizes and expedites the work of the Council, serves most Council committees, and supports the work of three other regional organizations (the Maritime Provinces Education Foundation, the

Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers, and the Conference of Atlantic Premiers). The secretariat coordinates common briefing books for Council (and other) meetings. Official minutes provide a permanent record of CMP decisions. The secretariat provides a framework for other regional undertakings through appropriate management policies, a regional pension plan and an employee benefits structure. The secretariat serves as a lightning rod for Maritimers with ideas for regional cooperation and undertakes research on topics of relevance to the region. Two of the secretariat's nine professional staff specialize - telecommunications policy and far east investment - while most others are generalists.

Council results might be grouped into eight categories, presented in a diminishing degree of intensity:

1. The creation of regional organizations within the Council's financial and administrative framework (currently on land information, higher education, municipal training and public school education).
2. Impetus/support for regional organizations outside the Council framework (among several examples, a veterinary college, a forestry training centre, a regional lottery and a regional police academy).
3. Initiation of joint programs, generally managed by line departments (on tourism, the environment, educational publishing and energy, plus a variety of other areas).
4. Creation of two kinds of consultative mechanisms: interprovincial committees (for example on the environment, telecommunications, francophone affairs, trade...) which are long-term, share information and sometimes are the focal point for joint programs; and task forces on specific subjects (government purchasing, research and development, marine manufacturing...) which tend to be short-term with specific targets.
5. Interprovincial agreements (on motor vehicle registration and driver's licenses, on Christmas tree grading standards and on government procurement to name a few).
6. Grants to organizations filling a particular regional need.
7. Common stands with non-government organizations or private sector initiatives with multi-province impacts (TQM pipelines, regional air services...).
8. Common stands regarding the federal government (something that is common to almost every Council meeting).

A description of the CMP is not complete without discussing Newfoundland. Up until December 1989 the Council's relationship with Newfoundland was quite ad hoc. Newfoundland participates in some initiatives but not in others. In December 1989 the Conference of Atlantic Premiers was announced by the four first ministers as a new consultative mechanism. Meetings will be concurrent, at least twice per year, with those of the Council.

THE WESTERN PREMIERS' CONFERENCE - An overview

The origins of the WPC can be formally traced to the creation of the Prairie Economic Council, on August 3, 1965. "Besides a desire on the part of the Prairie Provinces to co-operate in matters of regional concern, there was also a recognition that co-ordinated, mutual policies would allow for a stronger, more effective representation of regional interests in national affairs."[29] The Council met twelve times between 1965 and 1973 and included the Premier plus one other member of cabinet. During this period interprovincial task forces studied post-secondary education, transportation, health, the environment and communications. British Columbia joined the Council in 1973, and the title 'Western Premiers' Conference' was formally adopted in 1974. The Conference created the Western Premiers' Council on July 27, 1990.[30]

The Western Economic Opportunities Conference, proposed by the federal government in 1973, became a focal point for early four province cooperation... "W.E.O.C. had been an appropriate test, the Western Provinces had responded with decisiveness, and the Western Premiers' Conference as a forum to develop common

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[29]Western Premiers' Conference - Report on Regional Cooperation, 1981, p.2.

[30]Communique, Western Premiers' Conference, July 27, 1990.

policies and positions was solidly established".[31]

The Western Premiers' Conference is the Premiers of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia meeting annually. Line ministers and provincial officials are involved with four-province committees and task forces, sometimes initiated by the WPC. A standing committee of ministers responsible for diversification has, in the past few years, played a role in supporting the work of the premiers in the economic sector.

Chairmanship rotates annually, with the Chair having additional duties respecting the agenda. The Chairman occasionally speaks on behalf of his colleagues. The Premiers meet once per year as the Western Premiers' Conference; special meetings have been held during the year when the need arises. The annual meeting is generally held in the spring, in advance of the annual premiers' conference. There is no permanent staff, however the provinces generally assign provincial intergovernmental officials the responsibility of overseeing conference initiatives. The responsibility for agenda items is generally assigned to four-province committees or individuals in the employ of one or more of the governments. The WPC is not based in legislation or formal agreement; there is no set mandate or objectives.

The WPC meetings have, since 1985, been held in camera with the majority of time devoted to premiers-only discussion. Meetings usually conclude with a communique and press conference. The Premiers' special July 1990 meeting in Lloydminster included a public session, and this may become a more common feature of future meetings.

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[31]Ibid, page 5.

The WPC has no official budget nor does it report to the four legislatures. Each Western province is sovereign and equal, effectively providing them with an individual veto over public pronouncements.

There are no official minutes of WPC meetings. Communiques serve as the only record of Conference decisions. Each province produces its own briefing book, however interprovincial committees may develop joint reports and recommendations, as directed. WPC results might be grouped into five categories:

1. Impetus/support for regional organizations (Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute, Western Transportation Advisory Council)
2. Initiation of joint programs, generally managed by line departments (tourism, environment, GATT negotiations)
3. Creation of two kinds of consultative mechanisms: interprovincial committees which are long-term, share information and sometimes are the focal point for joint programs; and task forces on specific subjects which tend to be short-term with specific targets.
4. Interprovincial agreements (on government procurement for example)
5. Common stands regarding the federal government and the national agenda (something that is common to almost every WPC meeting)

The four western provinces have much in common. They, like the Maritime provinces, have distinct identities too. The western premiers very much shape the activities and successes of western cooperation.

CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE TWO CANADIAN EXAMPLES

This section evaluates the CMP and WPC against the theoretical framework proposed at the end of section two.

1. The three assumptions - sovereignty, unanimity and community of interest - are valid in both the CMP and WPC. One important contrast between the CMP and WPC is notable, with respect to the concept of unanimity. It is noted that partnerships must have the discipline to know when the veto ought to be applied and the strength to resolve conflict. The CMP is an

ongoing body with a number of structures and checks and balances that are involved in making decisions and resolving conflict. The Maritime premiers often deal with matters related to multi-government organizations outside the Council framework, and to that end serve as the final arbiter for Maritime cooperation. The WPC is an annual meeting, and has little capacity to act on matters between meetings.

2. Partnerships can be measured against the degree of formalization, intensity of involvement, nature of reciprocity and the standardization of transactions. The CMP is formalized through legislation, an agreement, and structures. The WPC has no formal mandate. The CMP meets four times per year by law. The WPC meets once per year and the western premiers occasionally hold special meetings. However the WPC has no formal role between meetings. (The new Western Premiers' Council may become this ongoing capacity.) The CMP has a very defined sense of reciprocity, involving the creation of programs and the provision of grants. The CMP exhibits a greater degree of standardization (a common briefing book, approved format for memo's to Council, minutes...) as opposed to the WPC that has none of these trappings. These differences suggest that the CMP has a greater range of options open to it for adopting multi-government solutions. Maritime structures more easily permit the creation of, and support for, regional organizations within and outside the Council framework. The CMP, in fact, more closely mirrors the functioning of a provincial cabinet than a quarterly summit of leaders.

3. Multi-government partnerships are networks and depend upon formal and informal relationships. A cursory review of both the CMP and WPC reveals this to be true. Networking is formalized through the meetings of the premiers and a number of committees. The CMP has a larger number of formal structures. However, in the case of both organizations, informal relationships among key players is important. In the senior ranks of Maritime and western provincial government one can easily find people who have worked with the partnerships. In western Canada there appears to be a fair degree of mobility among the public services; despite the existence of interchange agreements this is less the tradition in the Maritimes.

4. Multi-government partnerships depend upon a variety of tools and techniques. In a strategic sense the range of CMP results, from the creation and maintenance of regional structures under the Council umbrella to the taking of common positions with Ottawa, demonstrates the opportunities open to the Premiers. The less formal mandate and disinterest in permanent structures limits the options open to the WPC. Multi-government partnerships operate without the traditional horizontal support structures, although the CMP has created a few structures that support the <u>implementation</u> of regional options. Most multi-government decisions demand the concordance of many people representing many interests in many locations. Consultation, and the resultant travel, electronic mail and fax machines, telephone calls, and paper exchanges are part of the multi-government environment. These modern tools are common to the CMP and WPC. The intensity of collaboration tends to impact upon the complexity of the processes used to manage the partnership.

5. Multi-government partnerships depend upon leaders with vision. The results obtained by both the CMP and WPC are highly dependent upon the premiers. The initial years of CMP were buttressed by the visionary, if controversial, recommendations of the Maritime Union Study. Many of the structural issues addressed by the Maritime premiers were the result of that study. Similarly, the Western Economic Opportunities Conference brought the Western premiers together and provided the impetus for closer western cooperation. The report by Dr. Charles McMillan, referenced earlier, may help the Maritime premiers in developing a vision for the 1990's.

6. The success or failure of a partnership must be measured over time and include an assessment of how the partnership influences the participants and their environment. A review of the CMP cannot be complete without an appreciation of how the Council interacts with their environment. Currently regional organizations (structures funded by more than one Atlantic province) employ over 2000 people and have a combined annual operating budget of over $100 million. Just in the past ten years $75 million went into the creation of four new regional assets - the forestry centre, veterinary school, special education authority and Atlantic Lotto. The CMP was intimately involved with the negotiation of three of these matters and many others. To understand the CMP one has to understand how the Council impacts on its environment. The timing of the annual WPC is intended to make it a vehicle to influence the national agenda. Successive communiques by the WPC on free trade are not, in themselves, important successes. The degree to which the WPC influenced the national agenda is essential in understanding the evolution of the FTA with the United States.

The proceeding six concepts help to clarify the differences and similarities between the CMP and WPC. As a framework they recall the complex nature of multi-government partnerships and help to describe how they function. The next section will attempt to assess the capacity of multi-government partnerships to be agents of change.

IV. MULTI-GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Multi-government partnerships are playing an increasingly important role in national and international affairs. They will be at the centre of efforts to protect and enhance the environment. Parnerships will continue the search for world peace and security. They will become, more and more, a focal point for economic prosperity. In Canada, multi-government partnerships will also play a role in constitutional renewal. Multi-government partnerships will be in the midst of change, and in many cases, they will be agents of change. But, as Machiavelli noted in The Prince:

> ...it must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things".

The framework developed in section two of this paper, and tested in section three, is useful in discussing the capacity of multi-government partnerships to be agents of change.

1. The assumptions of sovereignty, unanimity and community of interest remain. Central to their being agents of change, partners must recognize that they are not fully autonomous. Partnerships must be able to manage conflict without always resorting to the veto. Partners must be willing to exploit their community of interest.

2. The degree of formalization, intensity, reciprocity and standardization reflect the complexity of a multi-government partnership. These four factors help define the possible set of solutions open to multi-government partnerships. The greater the complexity, the greater the number of options for change through a multi-government partnership.

3. To be effective agents of change partnerships must hone their network skills. Information flow must be maximized and the partners must develop mutual respect and trust.

4. Multi-government partnerships use a unique set of tools and techniques. Their capacity to be effective agents of change will also depend on how these tools and techniques are developed and used.

5. Political leaders are the key ingredient to making multi-government partnerships work. To that end leaders will ultimately decide whether multi-government partnerships are effective agents of change. Leaders must focus on ends. Partners must possess a common vision.

6. To be an effective agent of change, multi-government partnerships must influence their environment. Change can be accomplished more easily in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation. Multi-government solutions must be viewed as legitimate alternatives. Partners must send out the appropriate signals: "...A bold vision of the Maritime Premiers cannot happen by executive fiat. Citizens must be involved." [32]

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[32]Dr. Charles McMillan, op cit, p.41

V. CONCLUSION

In Section I this paper offered a definition of, and discussed the environment for, multi-government partnerships. Section II put forward a theoretical framework for multi-government partnerships. Section III reviewed two multi-government partnerships, and applied the theory developed in the previous section to them. Finally, Section IV discussed the capacity of multi-government partnerships to be agents of change.

There is minimal information available on the role and functioning of multi-government partnerships, particularly in Canada. Perhaps they have escaped scholarly review for good reason. Perhaps not.

Multi-government partnerships are not traditional structures. Understanding them requires non-traditional approaches. Multi-government partnerships can be effective agents of change, but certain prerequisites must be in place. Among those necessary prerequisites, multi-government options must be viewed as legitimate alternatives by the public, private sector, academics and the governments. Each of these stakeholders can play a role in removing the barriers to effective cooperation.

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